

FAUN FABLES

COLLECTING TALL TALES FROM AROUND THE WORLD



THE TRANSIT RIDER

OUT NOW, FAUNFABLES.NET

Fronted by Californian artist and singer Dawn McCarthy, and backed by stellar contributors including Nils Frykdahl of Sleepytime Gorilla Museum (see *Bizarre* 112), Faun Fables is a unique and visceral blend of music and theatricality that the band terms 'songtelling'. And like many musicians, McCarthy learned her most valuable lessons on the road...

Your latest album, *The Transit Rider*, is about a train journey and the people you meet along the way. Why this fascination with travelling?

For as long as I can remember I've had the urge to travel, to be a sort of anthropologist or wandering scientist who goes around meeting people and experiencing different things. I was brought up in a small town in Washington which wasn't sympathetic to the arts – and which was apparently cursed by gypsies – so I moved to New York to do some cabaret-style sideshow work with the Bindlestiff Family Circus. After a while the vortex of New York became oppressive, so I left the city with an open ticket. I've been touring pretty solidly for five years now, and the best things I've learned in my life were picked up on the road.

You must have met some amazing folk along the way...

The true gold of this travelling work is the people you meet. From the Hobbit-like guy in Australia who showed me wild koala

bears in the dead of night to the elderly lady in Oakland who held the world record for jumping out of aeroplanes, the people I've met have been incredible. It's also allowed me to talk to older people and learn more about the past, which is great as I'm often troubled by the pace of modern life and how we've become disconnected from nature's cycles and rhythms.

"I was brought up in a small town that was cursed by gypsies, so I ran away to the circus"

As you've collected stories from around the world, I guess this is how Faun Fables' 'storytelling' style developed... It's hard to describe what we do, but basically we tell stories with songs, and all our numbers have a narrative emphasis. There's a quality in the vocals that has more presence of character, almost

like an actor, which allows me to play different roles. It also allows me to explore my vocals, rather than being like a voice student who learns to achieve sounds mechanically. I'd rather allow my singing to evolve instinctively so I have my own take on it. Actually, that's not true – I'm just too lazy to become technically proficient.

David McComb



Faun Fables (left to right): Jonya Chernoff, Matt Lebofsky, Dawn McCarthy and Nils Frykdahl

OBSCURE CORNER

YOUR MONTHLY INTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD OF OUTSIDER MUSIC

10. LUCIA PAMELA



Who's she? In this shallow, celebrity-obsessed age, a lack of talent is no barrier to fame and fortune, so long as you can capture the imagination of tabloid journalists and a zombified TV audience. How ironic, then, that someone like Lucia Pamela – whose music career spanned nine decades – has been all but forgotten. Voted Miss St Louis as a teenager in 1926, Pamela devoted her life to showbusiness, performing across the US and Europe throughout the last century and winning a Medal of Honor from Congress for entertaining American troops during wartime. She was also immortalised in Ripley's *Believe It Or Not!* for memorising more songs than anyone else (10,000-plus!), and was the creative force behind numerous US radio programmes, stageshows and even a colouring book for kids "from the ages of three to 80".

Why should we care? In 1969, Pamela unleashed *Into Outer Space* – an LP which has since become the Holy Grail for fans of outsider music. Purportedly recorded on the Moon – long before the Apollo XI team set foot on our celestial satellite – *Into Outer Space* sees Pamela playing all the instruments herself, creating an offbeat, charming cacophony where perky pianos collide with madcap drums and wild clarinets, the instruments struggling to compete with Pamela's unearthly growling and chattering as she relates the amazing things she's seen in space, including talking cows, singing cats and an intergalactic dance known as the 'Flip, Flop, Fly'.

Where is she now? Pamela died in July 2002, but not before staging several *Into Outer Space* shows to raise money for local charities in Los Angeles. Her work remains a source of inspiration for leftfield musicians, most notably Laetitia Sadier and Tim Gane of Stereolab, who penned 'International Colouring Contest' as a tribute to Pamela and sampled her voice for the album *Mars Audiac Quintet*. **David McComb** **CURRENTLY AVAILABLE:** *Into Outer Space* has been reissued. Get it from Arfarrecords.com